

## **'Prophets or profits'**

### **Amos 7: 7-15 NKJV**

7 Thus he showed me: Behold, the Lord stood on a wall made with a plum line , with a plumb line in his hand.

8 And the Lord said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb line."

Then the Lord said: Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore.

9 The high places of Isaac shall be desolate, And the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste. I will rise with the sword against the house of Jeraboam"

10 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeraboam king of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words.

11 "For thus Amos has said: 'Jeraboam shall die by the sword, And Israel shall surely be led away captive from their own land.'"

12 Then Amaziah said to Amos: "Go you seer! Flee to the land of Judah. There eat bread, and there prophesy.

13 But never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary and it is the royal residence,"

14 Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: "I was no prophet, Nor was I a son of a prophet, But I was a sheep breeder and a tender of sycamore fruit.

15 Then the Lord took me as I followed the flock, And the Lord said to me, Go, prophesy to my people Israel."

This is a passage from the Bible which will be familiar to all Freemasons but do we really understand what it is all about?

In building terms we're all aware of the use to which the plumb line is put and that is to ensure that the structure is built to the plumb and ensure that providing the foundations are sure it will not fall down. There are many ways nowadays to ensure this, spirit levels, laser levels etc and they all work but sometimes the simplest method is the best. If a building is not built to the plumb, then inevitably the walls will buckle and the building will collapse.

It looks as though Amos, realising the high standards required for building, knows that God's standards are so much higher and he's using the plumb line to measure up his people Israel and found them wanting.

Where was ancient Israel out of line? For starters, many Israelites were addicted to luxury and sunk in self indulgence. Trusting in their wealth, they had forgotten their need for God. Along with Israel's greed and laziness went many other sins and every bit as bad as these "sins of the flesh" go corruption, bribery, social and economic justice.

Our God is vitally concerned with how the least and the last are treated in any society. The mark of a nation is not how powerful or how wealthy it is but whether or not it takes care of its outcasts and the poor. God says in Isaiah "I'll make justice the measuring stick and righteousness the plumb line "

God's people had been measured up and found lacking.

Are we seeking justice for the least and the last here in our country? Amos would be taken aback by the way our (mostly) wealthy society still has a vast underclass. The number of children who go to bed hungry at night, the need for food banks, homelessness, it just seems to go on and on.

The inequality in the world is being sharply brought into focus at the moment with the vaccine for Covid-19. Over 80% of the UK have been vaccinated while in Africa it is 2%. Shouldn't we be getting out there and sharing it on a more equal basis? At the end of the day we will all be the beneficiaries of a suppressed virus. The latest indication of the greed and inconsideration in our society is the mad panic to buy fuel, of which there is no shortage. Man mind thyself...

We as Freemasons are renowned within our own fraternity for doing good works but can we do more? There's a question to ask ourselves, were we put on trial for being a Freemason would there be enough evidence to convict us?

None of us are perfect and we most surely come up short when measured against Jesus' perfection. Yet this same carpenter who points out our crookedness is also our Saviour, a firm foundation and a cornerstone on which we can build.

Let's keep the good work going and build on it bit by bit to try to make the world a little better place in which to live.

Stay safe.

Until the next time Brethren.